

*Submission from Remote Area Nurse***Inquiry into community stores in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**

Wadeye (Port Keats), 420km drive south-west of Darwin, N.T, is a community I recently spent 2 months working in as a Remote Area Nurse. The estimated population is said to be, 2200 Aborigines and 200 non-indigenous, making Wadeye Australia's biggest Indigenous town. I'm very pleased to know that an inquiry into the stores in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities has commenced, as my major concern in relation to the Indigenous Health was directly linked with the poor access to good nutrition.

In discussing the issues directly of the community store in Wadeye, it is of greatest importance to consider the indirect issues, including social aspects, cultural differences & influences, deprived housing standards, astronomical numbers of people per house, minimal employment & schooling opportunities, seasonal weather, and lifestyle habits.

Specifically in Wadeye there is a butcher shop, takeaway, post office, fruit and vegie (only open while fruit and vegetables are available) shop and a small supermarket "Murrinhpatha Nimmipa Store", managed by the non-indigenous, with non-indigenous being the majority of staffing.

Food supplied to this community occurs fortnightly via the Perkins Barge.

Ownership of refrigerators is only by a minority of community members; therefore daily reliance on the community store is necessary for most families.

1. Food supply, quality, cost and competition issues

The obvious issues include:

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10 FEB 2009

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- Inadequate supply of fresh fruit and vegetables – with the fruit and vegetable shop only being open for 3-4days post barge delivery
- The quality of F&V is satisfactory, with the government subsidy the cost is reasonable, however the amount of F&V supplied to the community is inadequate.
- An abundance of unhealthy foods and foods of addiction available, inc. Coke, Chocolate & Ice-creams
- Minimal variety and choice in product brands
- No competition with only one store, creating a pricing monopoly
- Interestingly the Take Away shop is cheaper then the community store, further encouraging easier access to foods, which reflect poor health outcomes.
- Please see enclosed store receipts reflective of the high pricing.

2. Effectiveness of Outback Stores Model, and other private, public and community store models

- *Hours of Operation* – Weekdays 0900-1145hrs, & 1330-1645hrs, & Saturdays 0900-1200hrs. In a community where the "9-5 lifestyle" does not occur, instead the nocturnal lifestyle the norm.
- *Time spent shopping* – with only 3-4 checkouts, the time spent doing the *daily* shopping is notoriously long, the occasions I did my brief shopping I waited up to 45 minutes in queue. Keeping in mind that with out adequate refrigeration and pantries in the housing, regular shopping is necessary.
- *Feast and Famine philosophy* – the poor supply of food into the community, with a once a fortnight barge delivery, continues to encourage the feast and famine philosophy, which is detrimental to health outcomes.

- *Ownership of the community store and the input of profits back to the community* - with minimal encouragement or opportunities, i.e. training & support, there is minimal encouragement of the community members to be involved in the community store. My understanding from many discussions with other health care employees and community members themselves, is that the profit of the "Murrinhpatha Nimmipa Store" is not benefiting the community as much as hoped.

3. The impact of these factors on health & economic outcomes of communities

Over 2000 years ago Hippocrates, the founder of Medicine, stated "Let food be thy medicine, thy medicine shall be thy food". A philosophy largely neglected worldwide.

Specific health issues seen in the Wadeye Community Health Clinic linked to inadequate supply and consumption of good nutrition include:

- *Increased risk of infection and higher incidence of the same, i.e. Urinary Tract Infections, Acute Otitis Media, wound and skin infections.*
We need to eat the pieces of nutrition, the building blocks, that allows our body to make the chemicals and hormones to function efficiently and to strengthen our immune system.
- *Higher incidence of Lifestyle related diseases, specifically Cardiovascular Disease, Diabetes Mellitus, Hypertension, all shown in Australian Statistics to have a higher prevalence in the indigenous population Australia wide.*
 - The World Health Organisation recognises that Heart Disease, Cancer, Diabetes Mellitus, Alzheimer's, Stroke, Obesity and Parkinson's as "Preventable", "Lifestyle related", "Degenerative" diseases. Science reveals that the common denominator in ALL lifestyle diseases is Free Radical Damage. Cellular metabolism itself causes 10,000 free radical hits to the human body. *Illness & Viruses, Prescription drugs, Poor Diet, Smoking & pollution, broken bones, herbicides & pesticides as well as stress*, all adds to the number of free radical hits to the individual.
 - The only combat to Free Radical Damage is Anti-oxidants, with the greatest source found in fresh, raw, vine ripened fruit and vegetables; clean from contaminants, with plenty of variety, reaching at least the bare minimum of 2 serves of fruit and 5 of vegetables each day.
 - Good Nutrition and good health go hand in hand, with significant health benefits achieved from eating fresh, raw fruit and vegetables. Researchers continue to find elements in fruits and vegetables – vitamins and other antioxidants, phytochemicals, and fibre – that strengthen our immune systems, impede the development of lifestyle related disorders, and further contribute to health and longevity.
 - There is strong international evidence that eating more fruits and vegetables maybe the single most important dietary change needed to reduce disease risk.
- *Young Children failing to thrive*, with a higher incidence of parasites, lower haemoglobin levels, all indicative of poor nutrition.
 - Many mothers continue to breast feed longer then required and in replacement of the necessary introduction of foods.
 - Low consumption of the iron rich foods
 - Increased consumption of foods that not only over feed the body in terms of calories but also strips the body of nutrition, and leads to disease, i.e. cokes high level of sugar is of concern, however also is the fact that the carbonation leaches calcium out of the bones.

Many of the health care staff is aware of the poor nutrition in the community. With food, including fruit, custard, yoghurt, saos, cheese, Milo, milk & sustagen being supplied where appropriate at the clinic, mainly to young babies and children. An initiative that was once donated by the Murrinhpatha Store.

WELCOME TO
MURRINPETHA
MINMIPA STORE
PH 08 89782350
ABN: 64030034809
TAX INVOICE

GRAPES LIGHT	@	\$12.85	/kg
BANANAS	@	\$3.90	/kg
ZUCCHINI	@	\$5.33	/kg
ORANGES NAVAL	@	\$4.23	/kg
WATERMELON SEEDLESS	@	\$3.45	/kg
SUBTOTAL			

Date/Time 30/12/08 16:10
 TURN 00000100:215
 MASTERCARD
 43753 742
 SAV A/C
 Expires: 10/09

3 @ \$2.99 /ea
 PAULS ORANGE JUICE 100%
 COFFEES JELLY S/BERRY
 D/DALE EX/SORT 3/56
 HN2 B/BEANS T/S 2/20GR
 VEGMITE 2/20GR
 SUNRICE CALROSE RICE 500G
 LEGOS STAR SUI/GARLIC
 COON LASTY 500G
 B/E CHOW MEIN VEG 500G
 AGREEN ENVIRO SHOPPING BAG
 B/E CHOW MEIN VEG 500G
 SUBTOTAL
 MURRINPATAH STORE
 PORT KEATS

TOTAL	5	\$34.45
ITEMS		\$34.45
CASH OUT		\$0.00
TRANSACTION INCLUDES GST:		\$0.00
% Indicates Taxable Supply		
THANK YOU FOR VISITING		
30/12/08	15:10	
CASHIER:		